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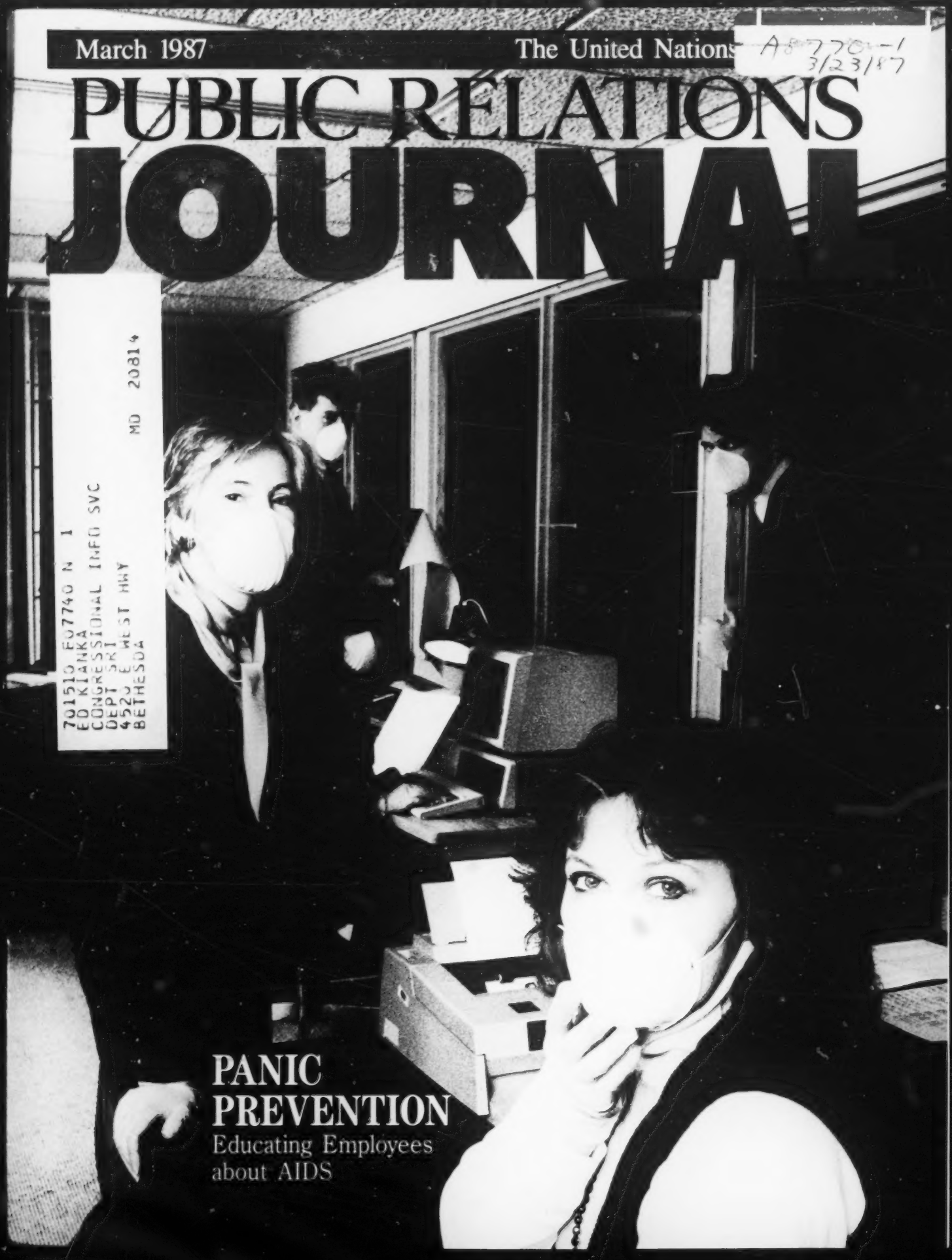

PANIC PREVENTION

Educating Employees about AIDS

INSIDE TRACK

REPRESENTATION

Until the day he walked into PRJ's office and suggested doing an article on public relations at the United Nations, William Baldwin, APR, had not thought about how the world body handled the function. Not so unusual until you know that Baldwin, as public relations director and, later, senior vice president of the National Foreign Trade Council, had been NFTC's UN representative for 15 years.

"I'd volunteered to be the UN representative because I thought it was a way to make a reputation in the organization," he says. "It never occurred to me that they were doing public relations." But that day he had gone to a briefing on "World Chronicle," the UN's "Meet the Press"-style television show, and "I thought: 'This is a big public relations production; I wonder what else they're doing.' "

"Over the years, I'd been to a lot of briefings," he continues, "particularly on the Law of the Sea and on the economic side of things, but I was interested in the briefings in terms of reporting back to NFTC rather than in terms of advocacy," the way a lot of the organizations that are officially represented at the UN see them. "But I never thought of them as part of a public relations program." Much of his approach was conditioned by NFTC's concerns, which are more congressionally than internationally focused.

A number of recent events, however, have put the results of the UN's public relations efforts more clearly in the public eye—most notably the recent portrayal of the UN's insignia and its peace-keeping forces in the television mini-series "Amerika." This, coupled with the appointment of Therese Paquet-Sevigny as the UN's new head of public information raises the issue, explored in Baldwin's piece ("As the World Turns," page 12) of how the function is, should be, and can be performed at an organization that spans continents and cultures.

Public relations at the UN, says Baldwin, is "in competent hands, but they have the same problem I always had and never licked—educating management, selling bosses on the importance of public relations."

For better or worse, public relations is often the silent partner, the behind-the-scenes player. As Baldwin's experience with the UN indicates, even for those whose living is the practice of the profession, the public relations behind organizations and events is often an invisible and unrecognized force. Often it takes a crisis situation, like the airing of "Amerika," to point up its importance.

A current crisis in the workplace that is demanding greater involvement by public relations professionals is the spreading AIDS epidemic—more specifically, the fear of contracting the disease. As *PRJ* assistant editor Meryl Davids discovered in preparing this month's cover story ("Panic Prevention," page 18), many organizations are finding that despite the extensive publicity AIDS has received, there is still a tremendous amount of misunderstanding about it. As a result, when employees are stricken, or rumors arise, fear sets in. Employee education campaigns—which often start by educating top management—have addressed the fears, conveyed the facts, and gone a long way toward not only restoring order to the workplace, but perhaps even stemming the disease's spread.

Also in this issue, the second installment of On the Record, featuring George Schweitzer on how public is the CBS eye; Frank Weaver, APR, on the incursion of doctors into health-care public relations; and Mardy Fones on a Nashville survey of CEO attitudes about the profession.

—Michael Winkleman
Editor

Public Relations Society of America

845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022
(212) 826-1750

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is an individual membership professional society of 13,847 public relations practitioners. Its major services to members include programs of Professional Development and Accreditation, an Information Center, publications, tracking of issues of national concern, and promotion of ethical practice through adherence to PRSA's "Code of Professional Standards." PRSA's mission is, "To serve the public need for understanding and cooperation among its diverse interests by fostering high professional and ethical standards for all those practicing public relations."

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(212) 826-1750

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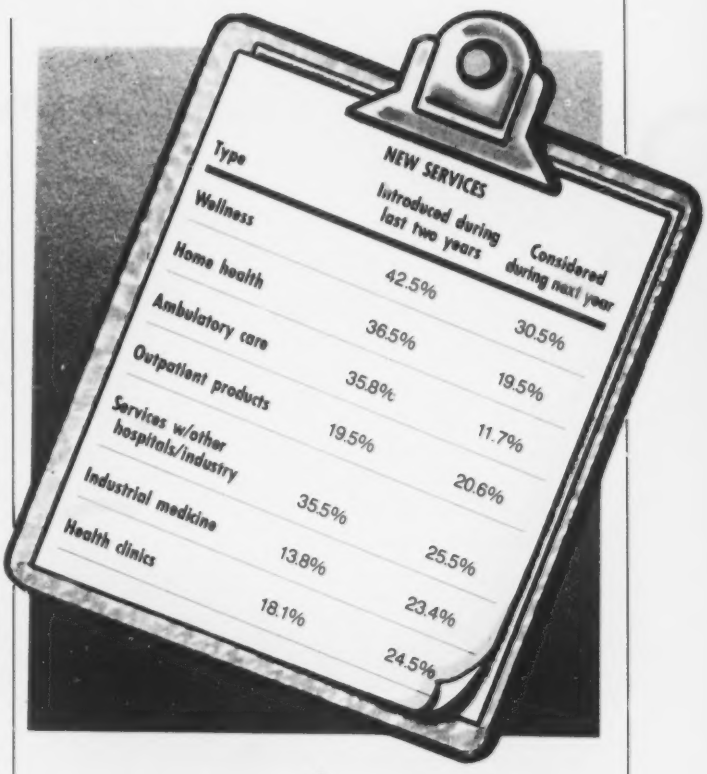
—Howard J. Benner, APR

Howard Benner, APR, president of OMNI Information Resources in Wilmington, DE, frequently writes about software for PRJ.

HOSPITAL ROUNDS

Fifty-nine percent of small or rural hospitals use marketing, and in 60 percent of these health-care institutions, the marketing function is combined with the public relations and/or planning functions. Increasing competition from alternative delivery systems and from larger, urban hospitals makes it necessary for small or rural hospitals to use marketing to maintain market share and increase community awareness of their services. These are some of the findings and conclusions of a recent survey of 476 small or rural hospitals conducted by the American Hospital Association's section for small or rural hospitals.

"Because small or rural hospitals often have limited funding, it is often the hospital administrator and/or the resident public relations or community relations director who is charged with investigating the marketing concept and how it may be applicable to the institution," says James G. Schuman, director of the AHA's small or rural hospitals section.



However, according to the survey, 22.5 percent of respondents have no prior marketing experience, and 32.5 percent have two years or less marketing experience. Only 20.5 percent have five years or more marketing experience.

Marketing accounts for 1 to 4.9 percent of 52.6 percent of respondents' overall budget. And these marketing expenditures are up, for the most part, from the previous year. About 27 percent of respondents report increases of 5 percent or more; 26.2 percent report increases of 1 to 2 percent; 20 percent report no change; and only 4.3 percent report any decrease in their marketing budget.

The new services that respondents are marketing include wellness clinics, home-health care, ambulatory care, contractual services with other hospitals and businesses, outpatient products, health clinics, and industrial medicine (see chart).

The advertising media most often used to market these services are newspapers (87 percent), radio (71 percent), and direct mail (65 percent). Only 26 use billboards or television. Image advertising is more popular than advertising a specific service, with approximately 72 percent of respondents using image ads.

Survey respondents were randomly chosen from a sample of 1,500 small or rural hospitals. The majority of respondents are from facilities with 50 to 99 beds, located outside of metropolitan statistical areas (59.6 and 69 percent respectively). About 52 percent of hospitals surveyed are affiliated with a multi-hospital system, while 48 percent are not.

—C.K.L.

SOFT SELL

Free advertising, direct mail, and marketing advice and information are available through a new telephone hotline. Callers can listen to taped "mini-seminars" that are three to five minutes in length, on subjects such as How to Write Winning Sales Letters, Ten Ways to Stretch Your Advertising Budget, Producing Better Brochures, and Twelve Questions to Ask *Before* You Create Your Next Ad Campaign. Topics are changed weekly, and listeners can obtain written transcripts of the tapes.

The hotline is the brainchild of Bob Bly, a freelance advertising copywriter. "A lot of companies can't afford to hire consultants, and it takes time to read a book, listen to an audio cassette, or attend a seminar," he says. "The hotline is free and takes only five minutes of the caller's time."

Bly readily admits his motivation for establishing the service was not entirely altruistic. The hotline allows prospective clients to "sample" his expertise without cost or obligation, and enhances his credibility with existing clients who have all been notified of the service by Bly's office.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the Advertising Hotline can be reached by dialing (201) 599-2276 (callers pay for the call).

—C.K.L.

Illustration by Donna Corri